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UNCLAS CARACAS 000152

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT PASS TO AGRICULTURE ELECTRONICALLY

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: CHAVEZ THREATENS TO EXPROPRIATE LARGE FOOD  
DISTRIBUTORS

REF: CARACAS 102

11. (U) This message is Sensitive But Unclassified, Please  
Treat Accordingly.

12. (SBU) During a February 4 speech celebrating the 16th  
anniversary of his attempted 1992 coup (Septel), Chavez  
threatened to expropriate large food distributors and  
producers. Chavez said, "I have ordered Mr. Vice-President  
Colonel Ramon Carrizales and my government to go on the  
offensive. It's not enough to close one store, and even less  
fair to close small businesses; no, we are going after the  
big ones. We are going to keep an eye on the big ones, that  
is where capitalism is at its fiercest, and the owners of  
these large chains are members of the rancid anti-Bolivarian  
oligarchy." Chavez added, "I hope they (the large food  
distributors and producers) give me the excuse to intervene  
and expropriate them, so I can put those food and medicine  
chains at the service of the Venezuelan people, and not the  
oligarchy."

13. (SBU) Comment: Chavez' most recent expropriation threats  
appear to be aimed at Polar, Venezuela's largest food  
processing company. During the period of January 21 - 23,  
the Venezuelan National Guard seized more than 500 tons of  
food produced by Polar, claiming that the food was being  
smuggled illegally to Colombia or "hoarded." (Reftel).  
According to Polar representatives, the confiscated trucks,  
traveling along their normal routes, were carrying finished  
goods for Venezuela's western states. End Comment.

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